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**An Important Step
Toward Meaningful Reform**

Rep. Steve Driehaus

Last weekend, the House of Representatives passed the most significant piece of healthcare reform legislation in American history. After months of debate and deliberation, hundreds of meetings and conversations, and tireless efforts to craft the right bill for our community and the American people, I was proud to vote in favor of a bill that will help to provide quality, affordable healthcare for millions more American.

When this debate began earlier this year, I made a clear commitment to what I considered top priorities for healthcare reform. We all know that meaningful reform must expand access to care and drive down costs for businesses and families. We

know that healthcare legislation must stop insurance companies from denying coverage based on a preexisting condition, or dropping coverage when a person becomes sick.

We know that we can find massive savings by eliminating waste and fraud in Medicare and Medicaid, by reducing the number of medical errors and discouraging defensive medicine, and by investing in healthcare information technology.

This legislation addresses all these needs, and moves us toward a system that will improve the quality of life for millions of Americans.

But over the last few months, I took the opportunity to hear from doctors and administrators, business owners and families, to determine what greater Cincinnati residents viewed as important parts of healthcare reform.

I found that it was critically important that we take steps to protect small businesses from escalating costs and ensure that middle-class families would significantly benefit from these reform efforts. Under our current healthcare system, small businesses have seen obscene increases in healthcare costs year to year, forcing business owners to cut benefits for employees or cancel coverage altogether.

I joined with my colleagues pushing for changes to the original legislation that will help protect small businesses, and provide their

employees with expanded healthcare choices at lower costs.

I heard from local seniors concerned about losing their coverage. Opponents of reform have used scare tactics and distorted the truth about this legislation.

In reality, we have taken steps to improve Medicare by eliminating waste and fraud in the system and stopping costly overpayments.

This bill will close the “Donut Hole” in Medicare Part D, improving the prescription drug benefit and helping save money for seniors on Medicare.

I also pledged that I would not vote for any bill that provided public funding for abortion. I worked closely with my pro-life colleagues and leadership in Congress to ensure that long-standing policy barring the use of taxpayer dollars for abortion would be applied to this legislation.

The agreement we reached lives up to this commitment; the bill provides no taxpayer funding for abortion.

While the historic vote cast in the House last Saturday was an important step forward, much work remains before we see healthcare reform enacted into law. As I have done throughout this process, I will continue to stand up for the priorities that reflect our community’s values and the needs of individuals in greater Cincinnati and across the country.

But the status quo in our healthcare system is unacceptable. Too many small businesses are cracking under exploding costs.

Too many families are driven into bankruptcy because they cannot afford their medical bills.

Too many men and women are denied the care they need for reasons beyond their control.

Fixing our nation’s healthcare system is a national imperative, and to improve the lives of countless Americans, we must meet this challenge.